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SUBJECT: SPAIN PLEDGES A GENEROUS RESPONSE TO TSUNAMI
DISASTER

REF: STATE 03792

1. Summary: The GOS has pledged a robust EUR 56 million (USD 74 million) aid package to the Asian countries inundated by the December tsunami. This package includes EUR 50 million (USD 66.1 million) in reconstruction credits and EUR 6 million (USD 7.9 million) in humanitarian assistance. In addition, the GOS will deploy nearly 600 soldiers, three planes and a naval vessel in the region to assist the aid mission. End Summary.

2. Providing humanitarian assistance to Asian countries affected by the tsunami is a major priority for the GOS. Foreign Minister Moratinos and Secretary of State for International Assistance Leire Pajin departed Jan 10 for a fact-finding mission to Sri Lanka, Thailand and Indonesia. Secretary General of Spain's aid agency (AECI) represented

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Spain in the February 11 UN meeting in Geneva. Spain's aid package will amount to over EUR 56 million (USD 74 million). Spain's aid effort is being supported by the military, which is deploying a force of almost 600 soldiers, three planes and several ships in the region.

Aid Package

3. We spoke with Cabinet Advisor to the Secretary of State for International Aid David del Campo to confirm Spain's aid contribution. Del Campo stated that Spain pledged EUR 50 million (USD 66.1 million) in Official Development Assistance credits for reconstruction, and will spend at least EUR 6 million (USD 7.9 million) on emergency humanitarian assistance. The GOS plans to send a plane of emergency assistance every 10 days until the situation has improved. Should the acute humanitarian situation be prolonged, the amount of aid provided will increase.

4. Spain's emergency humanitarian assistance includes at least EUR 1 million (USD 1.3 million) donated by the governments of Spain's autonomous regions. The regional government of Catalonia and Catalan municipal governments provided EUR 480 thousand (USD 635 thousand) of regional contributions.

High Level Political Interest

5. President Zapatero held a press conference on January 8 to publicize Spain's response to the tsunami disaster. He dispatched January 10 Foreign Minister Moratinos and Secretary of State for International Aid Leire Pajin to the

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region to meet with officials in Sri Lanka, Thailand and Indonesia. In delivering reftel, we learned that the AECI Secretary General Juan Pablo de Laiglesia represented Spain

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at the January 11 UN Donor's Conference in Geneva. Defense Minister Bono also worked closely with President Zapatero and other ministers on Spain's humanitarian response.

Military Deployment

6. Econoff spoke with The Ministry of Defense's Deputy Director General for Cooperation and Civil Defense General Jose Antonio Company Follana regarding Spain's military deployment in support of humanitarian efforts in the tsunami zone. General Company confirmed that Spain would soon deploy a total force of 594 troops in the region. Five transport planes were sent to Sumatra, and three will remain deployed in the region along with the first tranche of 70 troops. Spain will also send an amphibious ship, with a unit of engineers, a mobile hospital and helicopters.

17. Comment. The GOS has made its humanitarian response to the Southeast Asian tsunami a high profile issue. Spain's relatively generous aid package of EUR 56 million to a humanitarian disaster is noteworthy for a country that was itself an aid recipient during the past two decades. The Socialist government has promised to increase international assistance during the next four years. Spain's large tsunami aid package and its efforts at the highest governmental levels certainly indicate the GOS commitment to keeping that pledge. We can also posit that the Zapatero government might view aid policy as an area where Spain is can take a more active international role in the next few years.

MANZANARES